



SNAPSHOT: SCENERY

1 Status

- The character of the scenery is incredibly diverse. The Forest spans a vast amount of land, diverse geography, landscape and scenery character types from alpine to grasslands.
- The Forest provides unique and highly valued scenery. About 35% of the scenery in the western part of the Forest is classified as “distinctive”. In the Pryors Mountains, Ashland and Sioux Ranger Districts about 70%-85% of the scenery is “distinctive” scenery. The remaining scenery is either “typical/common” or “indistinctive”.
- Most of the existing condition of the scenery is high or very high. The condition of the scenery across the Forest is roughly 92% “Very High” or “High” Scenic Integrity, 2% is “Moderate” and the remaining 6% is “Low”. The 8% of “Moderate” and “Low” accounts for specific areas and points on the ground where there are dense numbers of roads or switchbacks, old timber harvests, transmission lines, or mining areas.

2 Trends

- Over the last fifteen or so years, natural revegetation has softened the visual impacts of areas previously logged by more intensive methods.
- Fire has changed the scenic character across some portions of the Forest. Where fire has burned through vegetation that used to hide old roads or sharp clear-cut edges, those old roads or edges usually have become visible again.
- Forest insects and disease such as spruce bud worm and pine beetles affect portions of the Forest. In some areas entire slopes now appear as grey dead trees, having lost their dead, reddish-colored needles. In other places, the dead trees appear more scattered.
- Increasing housing development adjacent to the Forest drives the need to implement more fuel reduction work in the Wildland Urban Interface, resulting in roads and houses becoming more visible to surrounding viewers.

3 Information Gaps

- The existing visual condition needs to be verified from view points and travel routes on the ground.
- A determination needs to be made as to if or where there are areas with high inherent scenic attractiveness but low existing condition of the scenery, to decide if remediation work might be appropriate to propose.
- A correlation needs to be made between the most important viewpoints and travel routes in terms of viewer concern and numbers of people, with a corresponding viewshed (distance) analysis from those viewpoints and travel routes.
- The most highly valued scenery (scenic classes) on the Forest needs to be determined by overlaying the viewshed and distance analysis, with the concern levels and inherent scenic attractiveness.

4 Need to Change Existing Forest Plans

- Scenery management direction is needed for lands acquired by the Forest Service since the 1986 and 1987 plans.
- New settlement patterns and new roads and in neighboring communities and areas may change the Forest scenery viewing opportunities and expectations.
- The condition and health of the trees and other vegetation in many parts of the NF land has changed since 1986-1987 due to different factors such as insects, disease, drought, fire or wind-throw. The changing dynamics of the Forest must be recognized in providing high quality scenery that is sustainable over time.
- The current Forest Plans approach scenery very differently. A consistent method across the one Forest is needed for managing the scenery resource.
- Both Forest plans used the Forest Service Visual Management System which has been updated and superseded by the newer Scenery Management System. Per FS policy, all new forest plans shall use the Scenery Management System.